**Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee 4**

**Environmental Protection, Climate Action & Energy**

**5th June 2025**

**Meeting Room 2/Hybrid**

**In the Chair:** Cllr. Eugene McGuinness.

**In Attendance:** Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin, Cllr. Ger Frisby, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Ms. Mary Rice; Mr. James Murphy; Mr. Noel O’Donoghue

**Also Present:** Tim Butler, Director of Service; Michael Arthurs, Senior Executive Officer; James Brennan, Executive Engineer Rural Water; Catherine Millea, Senior Staff Officer; Marian Nolan, Assistant Staff Officer;

**Apologies:** Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh; Cllr. Joe Lyons

Cllr Eugene McGuinness opened the meeting and welcomed the Committee members.

**Item 1 Declaration of interests**

None reported.

**Item 2 Confirmation of Minutes**

Proposed: Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin

Seconded: Mary Rice

**Item 3Matters Arising**

There were nine action points from the previous meeting. Michael Arthurs provided a response to each. Follow on points were raised:

1. Mary Rice and Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin thinks there is still confusion around recycling, specifically where an item is made of mixed materials.

**ACTION:** Michael Arthurs to raise this with WERLA and bring findings to the next meeting.

1. Cllr. Pat FitzPatrick believes there needs to be an awareness campaign on the movement of soil and stone. It is important that people understand this is a national policy, not local. Tim Butler agreed adding that once this is done, KCC will continue to work with the CIF and IFA.
2. Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin wished to acknowledge the good work being done by the EAO with regards awareness and the schools programmes.
3. Regarding the “cherry picking” of routes by waste collection providers – Michael Arthurs advised that the local authority does not have any powers over companies to service a particular area. Cllr Eugene McGuinness stated that it may not always be economically viable for companies to service particular routes and that the gap needs to be bridged.

**Item 4 Progress Report by Director of Services**

Tim Butler presented highlights of the Director’s Report and distributed copies of a new leaflet compiled by the Climate Action Office that details the grants and supports available to individuals and group who wish to take local climate action. The leaflet will be presented to all Council members at the next plenary meeting.

A number of comments/queries were taken from the Committee.

1. Cllr. Eugene McGuinness queried the progress of the public lighting project, with further input from Cllr. Pat FitzPatrick. Tim Butler responded with details on the challenges and current status.
2. Cllr Eugene McGuinness asked if CCTV can be used as a deterrent to dumping. Michael Arthur advised that the process was being finalised and re-iterated the importance of being compliant with legislation. Cllr. Pat FitzPatrick noted the importance of getting the cameras up and running. Cllr Eugene McGuinness acknowledged that the correct process must be followed but asked for the it to be completed as quickly as possible.

**Item 5 DECC National Policy Statement Roadmap on Circular Textiles**

Michael Arthurs gave a brief overview of the Policy Statement including the key issues and objectives. A public consultation has been launched and Kilkenny Co. co. will be making a submission. Michael Arthurs welcomed any observations from the Committee, noting the deadline for submissions is 7th July.

A discussion followed about the contribution of fast fashion to the issue of textiles waste.

**Item 6 Updates**

1. **2024 Domestic Waste Water Treatment System (DWWTS) Inspections**

Michael Arthurs updated the Committee on stats relating to the 2024 DWWTS inspections and follow up/close out of failures from previous years noting that Kilkenny County Council have exceeded their required minimum number of inspections to be carried out in 2024 and that the % of failures for the years 2013-2024 that were fully closed out and remediated has improved on the previous year.

Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin noted the high failure rate. Regarding the closure of swimming areas, he also asked if it is possible to lift notices quicker. Michael Arthurs that the section is looking at investigations into the pollution issues.

1. **Burial grounds Bye-Laws**

Presented by Tim Butler. The public consultation process was completed in January of this year, three submissions were received. Tim spoke through the submissions and any resulting changes to the Draft Bye-Laws. Comments were received from Cllr. Eugene McGuinness, Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin and Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick.

Chair, Cllr. Eugene McGuinness, agreed that the Bye-Laws be presented to the June plenary meeting for adoption.

1. **Rural Water**

Tim Butler advised the Committee that Rural Water is now part of the Environment Section. James Brennan (Executive Engineer Rural Water) gave an overview of:

* the scope of work and water supply types covered by the Rural Water Programme,
* stats on the number of schemes in the county
* the grants and subsidies available.

James also advised that the EPA now require small private supplies serving a commercial or public activity e.g. schools, housing estates, bakeries, B&B’s and commercial premises to complete group B testing. The charge for this testing is in the region of €1,100 or a total annual charge of approx. €250,000. Up to now, the HSE completed this testing on behalf of the council at an annual cost of approximately €50,000.

Kilkenny County Council cannot cover the additional charges and the Department have refused to cover it. Concerns were raised by all about the impact of the increased costs on small businesses. Tim Butler to bring to CCMA.

1. **Textiles**

Michael Arthurs gave an overview of the Local Authority Textile Collection Service advising that global market conditions are impacting on policies. Michael also discussed the evolving policies including the national advisory group, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications National Policy Statement (due in March/April) and the Waste Framework Directive.

A discussion followed about the impact of fast fashion, the need to raise awareness amongst younger people, particularly at post-primary level and potentially through the Green Schools programme. Members also discussed the issue of dumping at the bring centres and people removing clothes from the bins. Michael Arthurs advised that there is a maintenance programme in place for the bring centres.

**Item 7 Any Other Business**

Michael Arthurs notified committee members the An Garda Síochana have requested that the Control of Horses Bye-Laws 2020 are amended to extend the exclusion zone in the city. Approved in principle by the Committee.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 4th September at 10:30am.

The Chairman Cllr Eugene McGuinness thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.